

January 2024

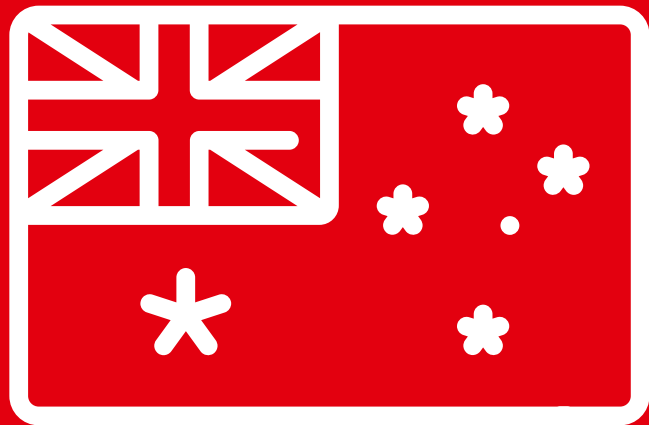
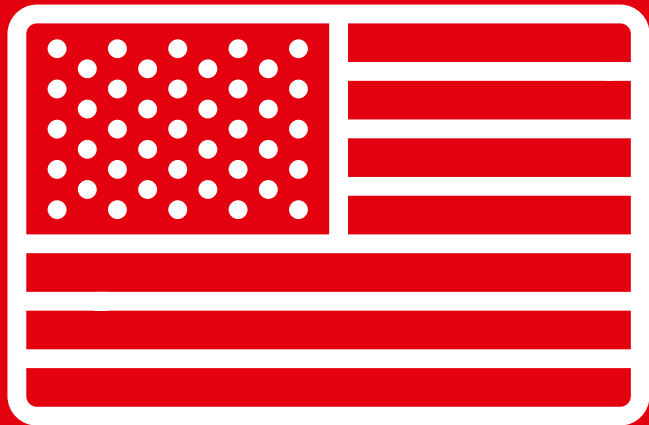
# READ UP!

Writing what's wrong, reading what's right.

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BY IDA TUREK  
AND LUNA CETO  
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**“Is there a difference in the way the US and Australia are held accountable for their settler colonialism and is that difference noticeable in the Berlin Anglophone literary field?”**





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he history on the United States of America and the history of Australia may differ a great deal when it comes to timelines, locations and characters, however there is one thing both countries share: a history of oppression and exploitation.

In both cases European settlers came to a new country they believed to have discovered and began oppressing

the people that the country belongs to, stealing from them and their land, dominating their land with their rules and religion and banishing all that was there before them, killing cultures and their people.

And in both cases it is history that has become present and it lays in everyone's hands to avoid it becoming future.

In the past few years, when looking at popular media, such as movies, books and TV-shows it can be observed, that the topic of American settler colonialism is slowly but surely finding its way into the public discourse and more and more people

become aware of the horrors of the past and present.

What is interesting about this is that the awareness is also spreading in countries, that at first glance might have nothing to do with the topic, such as Germany (when diving deeper into colonial history it becomes clear rather quickly that having nothing to do with the past is simply impossible). People of every age-group, gender, class etc. seem to know at least something about the US-American history and the treatment of Native Americans, there is a sense of responsibility when it comes to at least knowing some of the facts.

***People seem to know at least something about the treatment of Native Americans in the US.***

However, when looking at Australia nothing of the kind can be said. People in Germany seem to only know of the existence of Native Australians, maybe that their treatment is also horrible, but there is no feeling of responsibility. It seems that when it comes to the US people in Europe feel closer to the culture and therefore also its errors,

Australia on the other hand feels far away and there is a sense of “them” as opposed to “us”. Europeans tend to think that they have nothing to do with what happened and is happening in Australia, there is the feeling of entitlement to be a “neutral judge”.

But why is that? And is this assumption even true? Do people that are neither US-Americans nor Australians feel more responsibility

***Europeans tend to think that they have nothing to do with what is happening in Australia***

towards the US? This question has been on our mind for quite a while now and this projects aim is to dive deeper into this assumption and take us one step closer to the truth. We decided to look into one of the biggest factors when it comes to shaping a person’s perception of the world: books.

It is obvious that the books we buy and read influence our way of thinking. But what and who influences the books we buy? What books are being sold and are these choices influenced by a seeming common ground? How do we decide what is worth reading about and what is not?

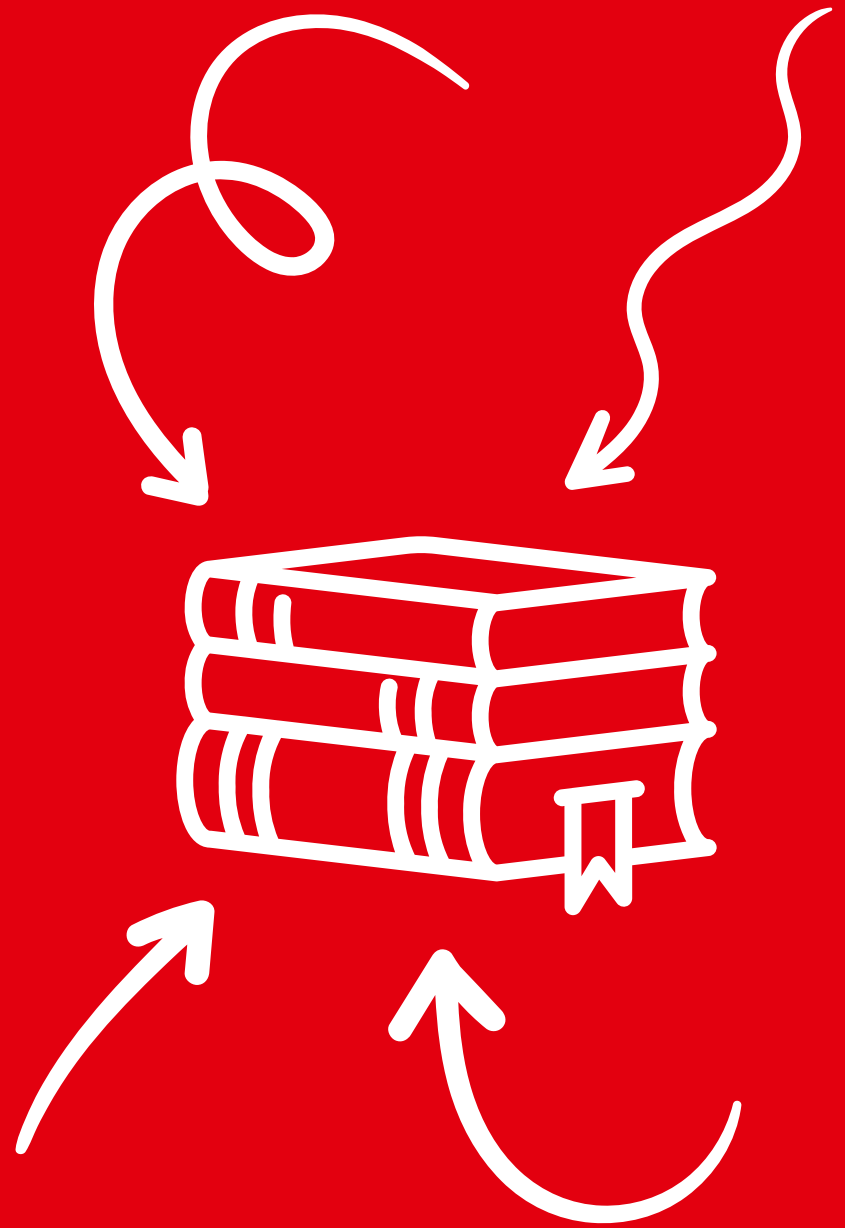
*Do we only feel  
less responsible because  
we know less?*

*Why do we know less?*

*Is there less information  
or are we simply not looking  
at the information  
at hand?*

These are the questions we had going into this research project, the questions that helped us to get to the bottom of our responsibility in colonial pasts of other countries.

**We took a closer look at the Berlin Anglophone literary field in order to narrow down our work.**



# QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this study is to examine the difference in the way the US and Australia are held accountable for their settler colonialism and whether that difference is noticeable in the Berlin Anglophone literary field.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

What gender do you identify as?: \_\_\_\_\_

→ Do you consent to your answers being used for the purpose of this study?  YES  NO

**Make a tick next to all authors who's names you've heard before or read a book of.**



## USA

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Erdrich         | <input type="checkbox"/> Joshua Cohen         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Richard Powers         | <input type="checkbox"/> Sherman Alexie       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Janet Campbell Hale    | <input type="checkbox"/> Toni Morrison        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colson Whitehead       | <input type="checkbox"/> Leslie Marmon Silko  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natalie Diaz           | <input type="checkbox"/> Alice Walker         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donna Tartt            | <input type="checkbox"/> Stephen Graham Jones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> N. Scott Momaday       | <input type="checkbox"/> Barbara Kingsolver   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Louise Elizabeth Glück | <input type="checkbox"/> Tommy Orange         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joy Harjo              | <input type="checkbox"/> Maya Angelou         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cormac McCarthy        | <input type="checkbox"/> David Treuer         |

## AUSTRALIA

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tara June Winch     | <input type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Down       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amanda Lohrey       | <input type="checkbox"/> Samuel Wagan Watson |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kim Scott           | <input type="checkbox"/> Josephine Wilson    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sofie Laguna        | <input type="checkbox"/> Ellen van Neerven   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alexis Wright       | <input type="checkbox"/> Anna Funder         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peter Temple        | <input type="checkbox"/> Veronica Gorrie     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Melissa Lucaschenko | <input type="checkbox"/> Roger McDonald      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tim Winton          | <input type="checkbox"/> Leah Maree Purcell  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tony Birch          | <input type="checkbox"/> Alex Miller         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frank Moorhouse     | <input type="checkbox"/> Claire G. Coleman   |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_



For our study we selected two bookshops - “DUSSMANN” and “SHE SAID” – that differ in size, popularity, audience and focus and closely examined them.

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In order to be able to obtain reliable findings, we decided to design a questionnaire that we would both use to find out what books by what authors are being sold in the bookshops and also to interview random people at the bookshops.

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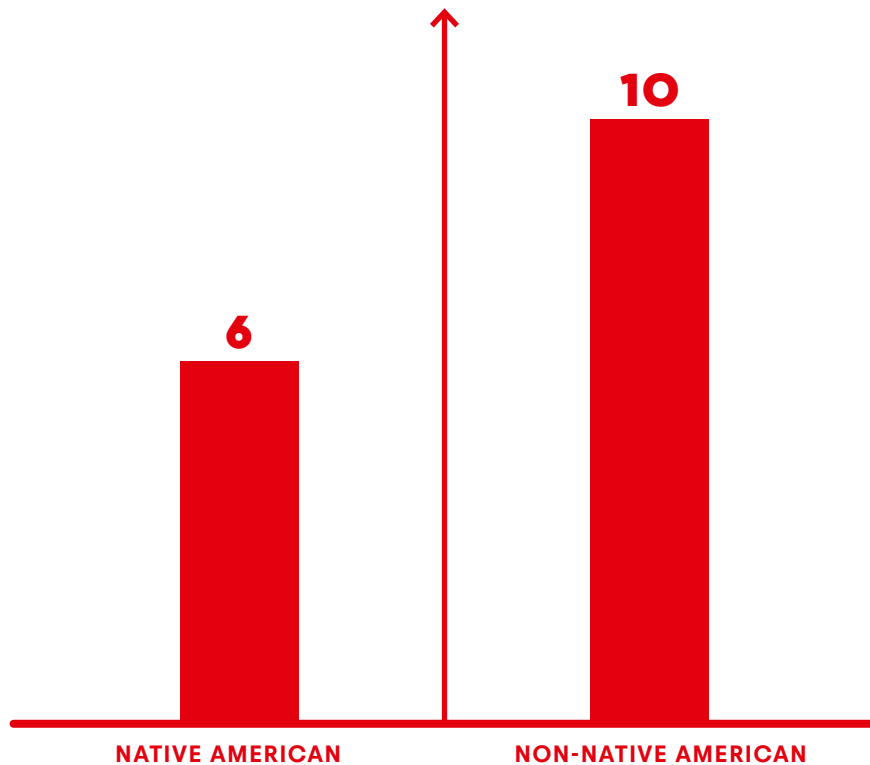
The questionnaire consists of forty authors, twenty from the US and twenty from Australia, ten authors of each section are either Native American or Native Australian and ten are not. We then proceeded to put little boxes next to all of the names and first researched, whether the two bookshops sold books by those authors or not. We decided to only count “sofort verfügbar”/”readily available”, as that presents the most accurate picture of what is being sold and what is not.

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The authors were chosen based on specific criteria. For both sections of the questionnaire, we chose authors who had either been previously nominated for or had won the Pulitzer Prize, The National Book Award for Fiction, The American Book Award, The Miles Franklin Award or other famous awards.

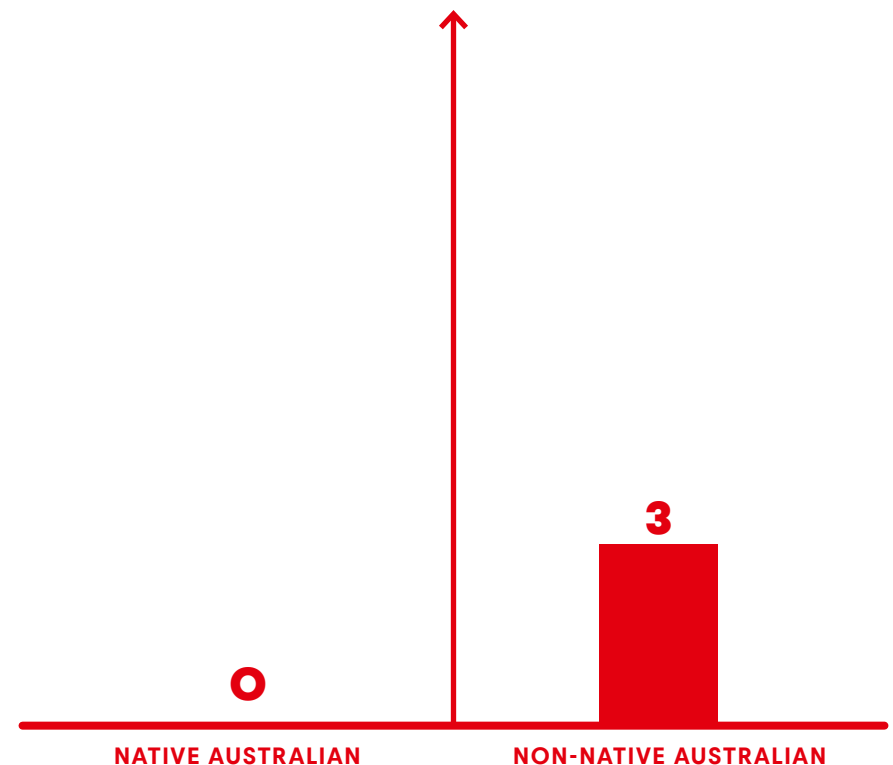


### "DUSSMANN": US-AMERICAN AUTHORS



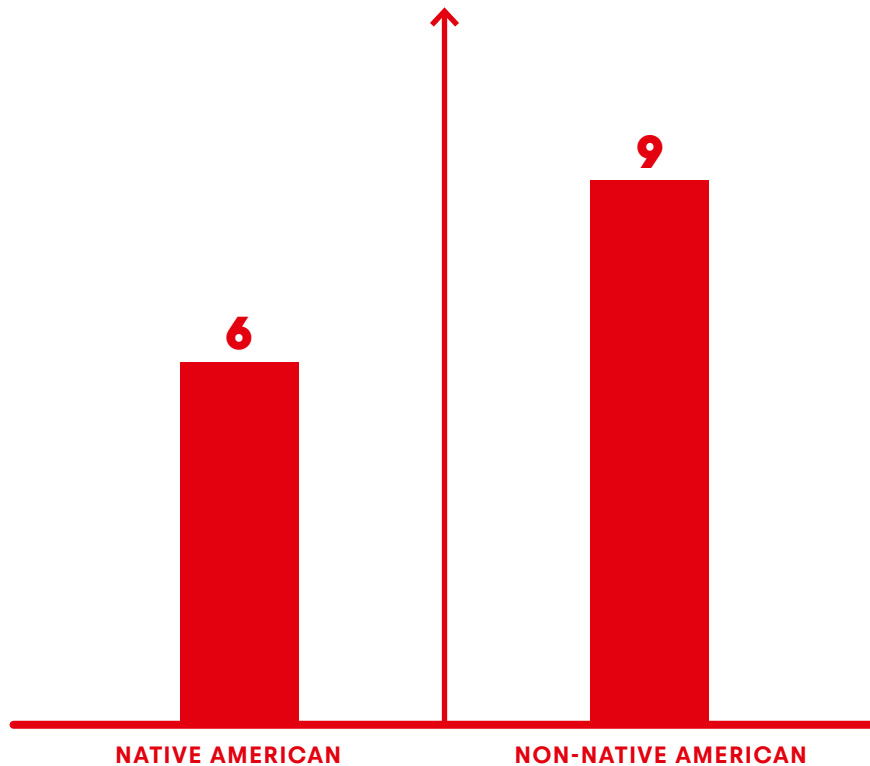
*Fig. 1:* This bar graph presents how many authors from the US section of the questionnaire have books that are readily available to be bought at “DUSSMANN”. We can clearly see that there are less Native American authors represented, than Non-Native-American authors.

### "DUSSMANN": AUSTRALIAN AUTHORS



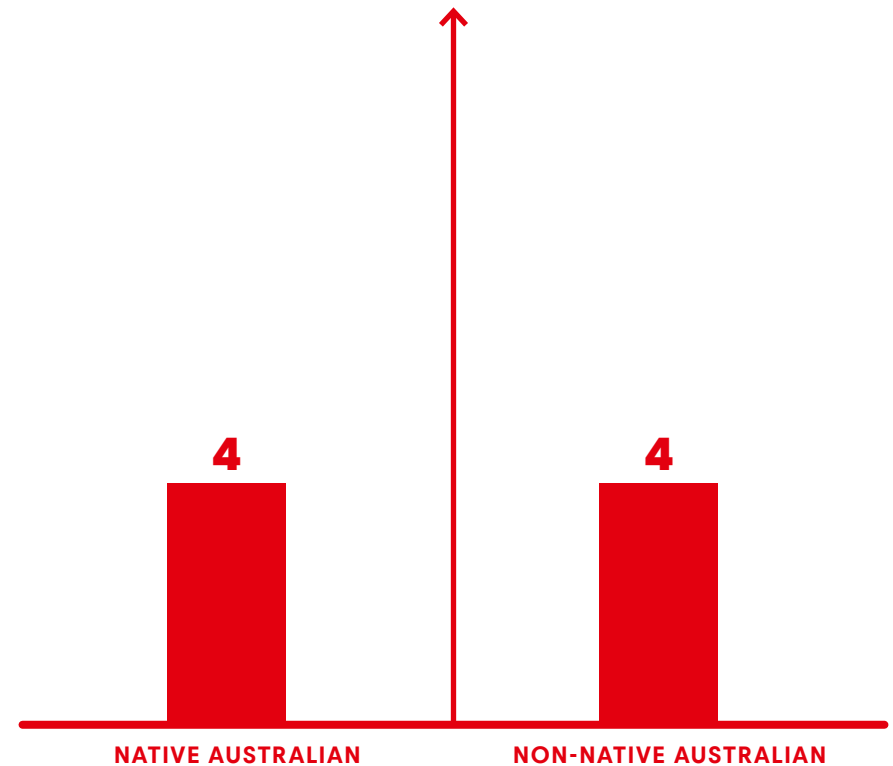
*Fig. 2:* This bar graph presents how many authors from the Australia section of the questionnaire have books that are readily available to be bought at “DUSSMANN”. We can clearly see that there are less Native Australian authors represented, than Non-Native-Australian authors. More specifically, there are actually no Native Australian authors, whose books are readily available at “DUSSMANN” at all.

### "SHE SAID": US-AMERICAN AUTHORS



*Fig. 3:* This bar graph presents how many authors from the US section of the questionnaire have books that are readily available to be bought at “SHE SAID”. There are less Native American authors represented, than Non-Native-American authors, however, the difference is smaller than it was at “DUSSMANN”.

### "SHE SAID": AUSTRALIAN AUTHORS



*Fig. 4:* This bar graph presents how many authors from the Australia section of the questionnaire have books that are readily available to be bought at “SHE SAID”. There is an equal number of Native American and Non-Native-American authors represented and compared to “DUSSMANN” there are also more authors from Australia in general.

**In total we asked thirty random people to fill out our questionnaire, the put our findings in Excel and then calculated the average of all sections.**



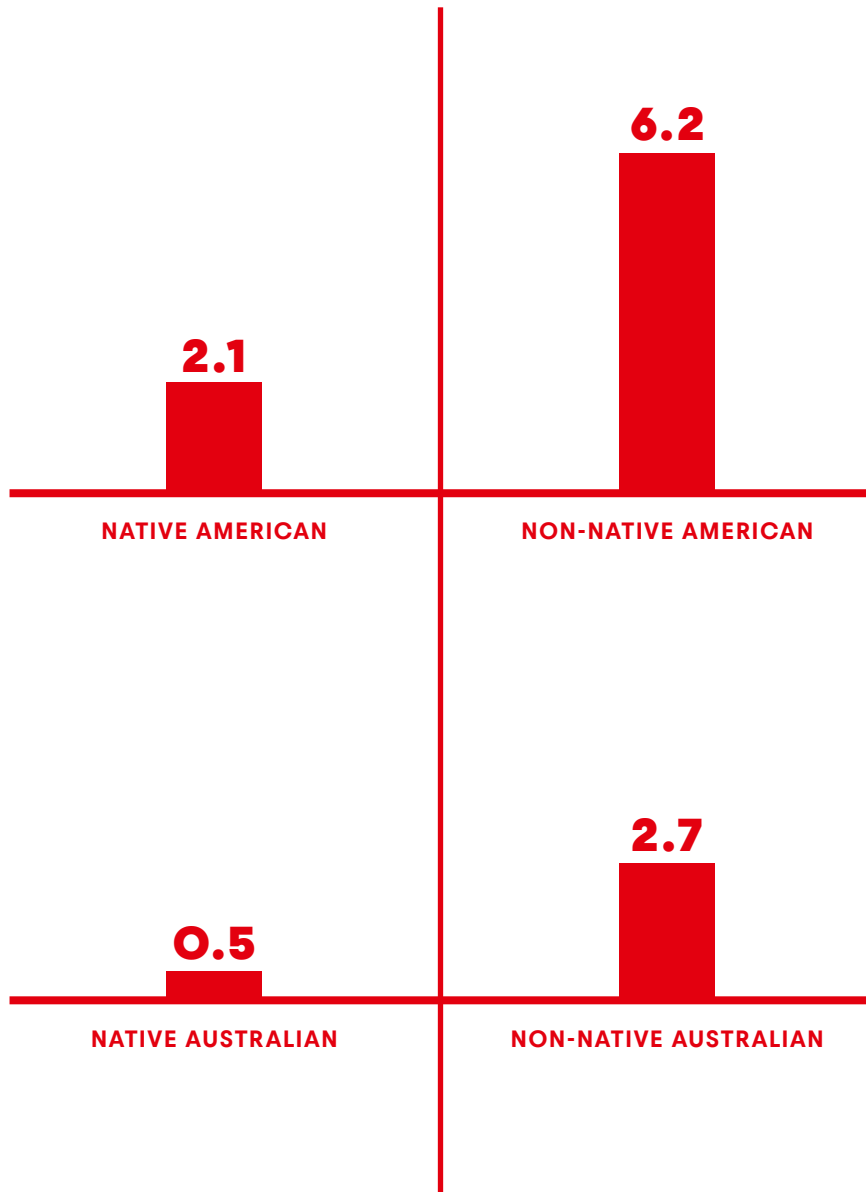
**On average people knew  
0.5 Native-Australian authors.**

**On average people knew  
2.7 Non-Native-Australian authors.**

**On average people knew  
2.1 Native-American authors.**

**On average people knew  
6.2 Non-Native-American authors.**





**5**  
people knew  
**0**  
Native-American authors

**25**  
people knew  
**1 or more**  
Native-American authors

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**19**  
people knew  
**0**  
Native-Australian authors

**11**  
people knew  
**1 or more**  
Native-Australian authors

# CONCLUSION

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ver the course of our research it has become very clear that by posing these questions, we had opened not one, but many doors to a topic that needs far more attention.

Most of the questions we asked ourselves in the beginning turned out to hold truth as our findings mostly reflect just what we expected.

There is of course the important aspect, that there is indeed far less information available about the Australian settler colonialism, as bookshops do not provide as wide of a range of books on the topic as well as books by the people affected.

It is of course also important to note that there are less books available by Australian authors in general, yet the ones that are, are seldom by Native Australian authors.

One could of course now go into a discussion

whether less information provided must necessarily equal less informed people or if less information is a product of less interest but one could also argue that as there are a few books on the topic provided in each of the bookshops looked at, so we are slowly getting there and information is slowly finding its way. Sadly, the same is true for Native American authors.

Our research has found, that people tend to know at least some of the Native American authors on our list, yet the numbers cannot be compared to the Non-Native American authors known, as they differ greatly.

In conclusion, our research shows that while it is true, that people know more about US-American settler colonialism and thus tend to know more Native American authors, the sad truth is that people do, both in the US-American and the Australian case, not know enough about Native American/Australian literature and are thereby missing out on an important part of the culture that is often erased.

It is everyone's duty to try and be as informed as possible, to look into important parts of our world's history, however uncomfortable it may be.

## **READ UP!**

**Interestingly, the bookshop “SHE SAID” had more books by Native Australian and Non-Native Australian authors than “DUSSMANN”, which actually had none by Native Australian authors readily available.**

**This therefore shows that it is not necessarily the size of a bookshop that determines the range and diversity of the books being sold, but rather who chooses what is being sold and how those decisions are being made!**

### **BOOKS BY NATIVE AMERICAN AUTHORS**

“Love Medicine”  
by Louise Erdrich (1894)

“Women on the Run”  
by Janet Campbell Hale (1999)

“Postcolonial Love Poem”  
by Natalie Diaz (2021)

“House Made of Dawn”  
by N. Scott Momaday (1968)

“She Had Some Horses”  
by Joy Harjo (1983)

“The Absolutely True Diary  
of a Part-Time Indian”  
by Sherman Alexie (2007)

“My Heart is a Chainsaw”  
by Stephen Graham Jones (2021)

“There There”  
by Tommy Orange (2018)

“The Heartbeat of Wounded  
Knee: Native America from  
1890 to the Present”  
by David Treuer (2019)

### **BOOKS BY NATIVE AUSTRALIAN AUTHORS**

“The Yield”  
by Tara June Winch (2019)

“Benang: From the Heart”  
by Kim Scott (1999)

“Carpentaria”  
by Alexis Wright (2006)

“Too Much Lip” by Melissa  
Lucascheko (2018)

“Blood” by Tony Birch (2011)

“Of Muse, Meandering  
and Midnight “  
by Samuel Wagan Watson (1999)

“Heat and Light”  
by Ellen van Neerven (2014)

“Black and Blue: A memoir  
of racism and resilience”  
by Veronica Gorrie (2021)

“The Drover’s Wife:  
The Legend of Molly Johnson”  
by Leah Maree Purcell (2019)

“Terra Nullius”  
by Claire G. Coleman (2017)

